

Seattle City Council

Neighborhoods, Arts, & Civil Rights Committee Meeting

Tuesday, 2 PM, October 28, 2003

Words' Worth

The Poetry Program of the Seattle City Council

Curated by **Christopher J. Jarmick**

Today's Words' Worth poet is **Curt Colbert**

Curt Colbert is a poet who reads regularly in the Seattle area. He is also a mystery novelist who is currently working on the third book in his private eye series set in Seattle in the 40's. Curt's first novel, *Rat City*, was nominated for a Shamus Award as the Best First Private Eye novel of 2001. His second book, *Sayonaraville*, has just been released. Curt is a Seattle native, Vietnam vet, and history buff who enjoys boxing and a good cigar. He lives with his wife, Stephanie, and bobtailed cat, Al, who are both pretty darned good at keeping him in line.

Georgetown

By Curt Colbert

My grandfather's iron hands once held wages, fat babies...

Proud of this place, he had to go sell apples
for a nickel each, along Airport Way South --

Old bordello turned recycling company
dust of whores, stale bootleg, work shoes echo
Dick, at the bar, says
"Them working girls was pretty trashy, mostly I went for the hooch --
my old lady never knew,
always made a nice pot roast, Sundays, after she got home from church.
Want a beer?"

Up the road, at the old boiler-works
years of pounding, ringing rivets and seams
dead steam, still as the heart that pumped this town
just rattle of crows on boilerplate, crickets in the steel
echo of grandpa on the line.

Original Rainier Brewery, abandoned, jets fly south over railroad sidings
purple thistles, morning glory, piled brick buildings, "Ice House" - "Hop
House" now artists' studio space, bright painted windows, mobiles and windsocks
a welded iron sculpture: "Rusted Worker With Sledge"

...cold metal sweats, for just a moment

Georgetown and grandpa labor
breathe spark and coke-ash
run ferrous blood
flex tempered hands
slake their thirst.

Days of Megatons & Roses

By Curt Colbert

Downwind from Hanford Nuclear Reservation
the Cold Warrior Memorial Trailer Park echoes and degrades.
There is no joy here, only
night-songs, great-headed bats, burrowing
luminous worms, Chevys and pickups on blocks
out back, ghosts like ash.

Gray-haired Boomers cook surplus Spam
for half-life parents, in beds like biers,
who pass time watching ticking tumbleweeds
fluoresce, roll into the wide Columbia, where
prehistoric sturgeon in radioactive silt
patiently watch the trailer park melt down to critical.

The parents relish the Spam,
dream of Cold War days and the bombs they built
for their beloved Boomers, rise up
in Airstreams & Single-Wides, gird themselves
playing Perry Como records,
mixing Manhattans and eating Vienna Sausages

from Harvest Gold Frigidaires, then toast
good old Mutual Assured Destruction and throw a last, greatest
bomb-shelter tour & cookout, complete with Early Warning Sirens
and a three-legged race, while the Boomers duck and cover, finally
flee the trailer park
as the desert turns to glass.

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